

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Tony Shekherdjieva-Novak,

Lecturer at AMTII "Prof. Assen Diamandiev": - Plovdiv,

on the dissertation of doctoral candidate Sarah Jane Lobeguiger de Rodriguez

for obtaining the degree of Doctor of Education and Science, on the topic:

The Operatic Polyglot: Routes and Techniques

in Western European Classical Singing,

with scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, consultant and vocal pedagogue Dr. Natalia Afeyan, in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, scientific speciality Musicology and Music Art

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1.General presentation of the procedure and the reviewed materials

The documentation of the procedure for the defense of a dissertation thesis authored by Sarah Jane Lobegeiger de Rodriguez, MA before a scientific jury is sufficient. The following statutory testimonies have been submitted: 1. Order No. H-RC 232 /13.06.2023 on the appointment of the scientific jury by the Rector of the NBU, Sofia. 2. CV of Sarah Lobegeiger. 3. Repertoire list with opera and operetta roles, concert, oratorio and arias and songs from cantatas. 4. Dissertation in English in 113 pages. The structure of the thesis consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions and bibliography - 80 titles mainly in the Roman alphabet, internet resources and 18 figures 5. Abstract of the thesis in English. 6. Abstract in Bulgarian. 7. List of publications of the doctoral candidate:

1.Lobegeiger de Rodriguez, Sarah. Navigating your voice in Multi-lingual Pursuits: Scills Workshop. Polyglot Conference 2020 - Global. Online Conference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYAZCvuzUmk>

2. Lobegeiger de Rodriguez, Sarah. How to deliver a presentation with Charisma, Credibility and Eloquence. Monash University Post-Doctoral Students Workshop, 2022 - Mathematics Departmen.

3. Lobegeiger de Rodriguez, Sarah. Creative Cognition for Opera Singers. In: Young scholarly forum on music and dance. NBU, 2023.

This work was discussed at a meeting of the Department of Music on 2/23/2023.

2. Brief biographical data about the PhD candidate

Educational degrees completed

Doctoral candidate Sarah Lobegeiger de Rodriguez obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in 2001, at Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia, and her Bachelor of Performing Arts degree, in 2004, at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

MA in Speech and Language Pathology - 2009/2011. Interestingly she chose to study for her Masters - Speech and Language Pathology at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Three years later she obtained her Masters in Music Performance - Opera at NBU, where she later began her current PhD.

Professional practice and employment

The PhD candidate has been engaged at the private institution Voice Science Melbourne, Australia from 2013 to date. Her speech therapy training has enabled her to work as an adult educator on overcoming foreign language accent in English speech (Accent Reduction) She specialises in accent reduction, voice rehabilitation, voice rehabilitation for performers, speech fluency, and consulting on corporate communication skills. She has also taught English in countries such as South Korea (Seoul, 2005-07), Germany (Magdeburg, 2007-08), Bosnia and Herzegovina (in Sarajevo, 2008-09).

At Geiger Voice Clinic (Pahran Market Clinic) 09/2014 - practicing general voice rehabilitation and voice rehabilitation for performers. She was an academic faculty member in 2014-2016. The Andrew Dean Fields Foundation provided Sarah with clinical supervision opportunities for students who completed the 12-day course. As a speech-language pathologist, she is involved in Pediatric Speech-Language Pathology in the school setting (elementary and secondary), and as an English tutor, she provides services to international students from diverse cultural backgrounds at Altera Lingua, Center for Foreign Languages. From the biography provided, I understand that Sarah Lobegeiger was a journalist and reporter from 09. 2008 to 02. 2009.

3. Relevance of the subject matter

My pedagogical path was very much connected with the Music Department of the NBU. The interruption of my employment as a vocal pedagogue in the department in 2014 has deprived me of having personal impressions of Ms Lobegeiger, who is a wonderful coloratura soprano and at the same time a very interesting researcher. I now have the opportunity to not only become familiar with her doctoral dissertation, but also, through her activity on the internet, to gain a more special appreciation of her personality and views. In addition to her knowledge as a specialist polyglot, Sarah offers strategies to reduce anxiety, boost confidence and help us when giving presentations and sharing our ideas with audiences. Also of interest are her videos on the problems of pronouncing English according to established rules in the UK, Australia, USA and Latin America.

The subject matter of her dissertation has interested her for many years. It is related to the education and work process that has accompanied years of research and the acquisition of further knowledge,

with the creation of new approaches and developments as a result of the personal research of the dissertator. The arrival of this work is a logical conclusion of the whole path she has followed.

4. Structure and content of the thesis. Appropriateness of the research methods to achieve the objectives

The dissertation contains 113 pages arranged in an introduction, 4 chapters, a conclusion, contributions and a bibliography.

Chapter One is entitled *Creative Cognition and the Singer's Body Matrix*. Lobegeiger defines the singer's body matrix as a model adapted to the singer's cognition necessary for his or her creative growth. A model required in delineating '*hypothetical processes of bodily memory*' (The quotations used by me in the review are from the abstract if not specifically marked. - T.Sh.)

Chapter Two comments on perceptual awareness, artistic attention, acoustic integrity, physical properties of singing sound, resonance, phonetic positions and settings, phoneme settings, prosody, etc. Particularly important in classical singing is *the ability to create an accurate acoustic picture defined by both the score and the historical canon of the art form*, explains Sarah Lobegeiger. The singer's need to achieve phonetic mastery similar to his/her native one when interpreting a work in a language other than the mother tongue forces him/her to become an "operatic polyglot". And since this skill is the result of a number of cognitive abilities and competences, the operatic polyglot sums up and unifies the integral image of creative cognition from multiple domains into a system of knowledge embodying a bundle of connections transcending the domain of the sung language. Of interest to me is the subchapter concerning deviations of phonological tuning, problems and errors in phonological tone tuning, phoneme shifting, and some prosodic deviations in accent. I support the contention that deviations in phonetic tone tuning and SPL level for different phonemes are also likely due to the influence of the singer's native tongue.

Chapter Three concerns vocal-phonetic motor learning and neuroplasticity, and their impact on the operatic polyglot. The three A's and their role in motor learning; Anticipation; Attention; Adaptation; The four phases of vocal-phonetic motor learning; The fast phase; The consolidation phase; The automatic phase; The retention state; The phonetic lexicon and the motor engram hypothesis; The ten principles of neuroplasticity and the daily routine of the "Western classical singer", are defined by Lobegeiger as the *mechanism by which your brain encodes experience and learns new behaviors*, (referring to (Kleim, 2008, p. 225)), incorporated in the singer's daily routine.

The role of deliberate practice and the resources of the training studio in stimulating creative cognition in the operatic polyglot, and the benefits of body matrix theory, flow and multimodal processing for graceful performance are the subject of **Chapter Four** of the study. I found the practice of keeping a journal for recording and evaluation suggested by the PhD candidate to be very practical and useful in view of the opportunity to track *insights, processes and difficulties* in performing exercises, and to formulate notes for observation and self-evaluation of singing goals. Equally useful are visual analyses, visual imitation, tempo training exercises, etc. This chapter comments on the benefits and practical necessity of applying the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in the work with singers. Conditioned by two main factors, acoustic (based on the peculiarities of the human voice) and linguistic-phonetic, the use of IPA is necessitated by the

phonetic specificity of any language. Knowledge of IPA makes the work much easier, and clarification of pronunciation becomes easily achievable through the use of universally applicable IPA symbols that simplify its phonetic notation.

5. Evaluation of the dissertation - knowledge of the problem, content and structure according to the established norms, reliability of the material, analytical approach and results derived

Sarah Lobegeiger's high competence and erudition, her thorough attitude to the subject under consideration, is evident throughout the thesis. I confidently assert that the researcher possesses expert and detailed knowledge of the problem, that she is able to analytically share others' scholarly contributions and create her own hypotheses. Approaches to developing linguistic and acoustic competence in performers of classical, operatic, religious music and art songs are explored, and techniques and modes of work that build *creative cognitive processes in the singer's studio* to become *operatic polyglots* are examined.

An important aspect of the performance process is the mastery and regulation of the voice throughout the range in order to convey the musical idea (abstract, S.L), writes Sarah Lobegeiger. The staging process is as much about the most appropriate and productive mode of voice as it is about the aesthetic demands of the time. This led to the emergence of the various schools and systems of training that were born and developed to meet the particular demands and needs of the time. Today, these processes have left behind the pedagogical empiricism, and modern vocal pedagogues are familiar with the great achievements in the fields of physiology, psychology, philosophy, and positive science, in addition to the historical development of this science. The methodology of vocal art should explain the overall vocal process, the formation and refinement of musical-auditory representations, developing all the musical abilities related to mental activity, to turn vocal technique into a powerful artistic influential tool in the performing arts. The dissertation under review supports my assertion:

Schooled singing is a particular kind of sound system with its own norms of construction distinct from speech. In the interaction of the two sound systems, the speech system is of primary and leading importance. This leads to the necessity of learning and mastering the phonetic norms of the language used..... "The main differences between singing and speech are of an acoustic, physiological, psychological and technical nature. I wrote in the second chapter of my doctoral dissertation 18 years ago.(citation is approximate)

A vital aspect of classical singing is the ability to create an accurate acoustic picture, determined both by the score and the historical canon of the art form, and also by the linguistic demands required of the singer in simulating the language being sung. Unlike speech, however, classical singing depends on the specific acoustics of sound....The singer who acquires the skills to perform the musical and linguistic demands at an elite level will be referred to in this text as an operatic polyglot.(Sarah Lobegeiger, Abstract, p.9) Having read Sarah's research, I agree in very large part with her conclusions. To some extent, these are also my conclusions. What is different is the timing, style and manner of formulation. I won't look for similarities, and I don't need to, but I think the true statements are similar regardless of the time and place they were made. The topic of

the study is clearly stated, the content of the work is consistent with the title. The text in terms of content and structure conforms to established norms.

6. Contributions and significance of the scientific work and publications on the topic

The doctoral candidate has formulated the following contributions to her research.

1. The dissertation explores the **cognitive and mechanical processes** that classical singers can deploy in their work within the practical skill of mechanically tuning the voice for pronunciation perceived as phonetically accurate.
2. A subject of analysis is the *hypothetical model for presenting the multifaceted intelligence of classical singing* with Giuseppe Riva's body as a matrix to aid in delineating the hypothetical bodily memory processes that define elite singing.
3. A new term, *operatic polyglot*, is coined for *the elite singer who acquires the technical mastery to sing proficiently in languages other than his or her mother tongue*.
4. *New parameters of singing pronunciation* are outlined, defining the multiprismatic properties of sung syllables, showing the unique characteristics and requirements of singing syllables as opposed to spoken syllables.
5. *A new term, "phonemic tone tuning,"* is being introduced *to capture holistically a unique singing skill, distinct from diction, pronunciation, or speech accuracy, by which the singer creates precise phonemic targets embedded in distinct overtones and resonant properties required by classical singing*. Three skills characteristic of the physical properties of vocalized sonority are outlined, related to the accuracy of phonological tone tuning.
6. *A classification system of phonetic errors* corresponding to rhythmic and intonation deviations is developed for performers to formulate their technical goals related to phonetic tone tuning and realize its importance. This *system* should support self-assessment and a deeper understanding of the way phonemes exist in the sound picture of sung music

8. The Abstract is 25 pages long and corresponds correctly to the content of the thesis.

9. Conclusion.

On the basis of what has been said so far, I evaluate the doctoral thesis favourably and propose that the esteemed scientific jury **award the degree of Doctor of Education and Research in the specialty 8.3 Musical and Dance Arts to doctoral candidate Sarah Jane Lobegeiger de Rodriguez**